These beliefs of the people in the existence of spirits and in life beyond the grave explain the existence and meaning of many customs practiced by the Georgian Highlanders. Thus, for example, the Tushes believe that the soul of the deceased continues to live among his relatives,[50] that the soul needs food and drink, like every human being, and therefore during dinner and supper a portion of the food is put aside for the satisfaction of his hunger. The relatives must take good care of all the needs of the souls of their dead, because of his ability to bring good and evil to the relatives according to the veneration shown to him.

"The world beyond the grave is known by the Tushes under the name of *suleti,* meaning 'the place of souls,' from the Georgian word *suli,* meaning soul. At its entrance sit the stern judges who receive the deceased and with sharp scissors cut two or three hairs from their heads. The *suleti* consists of two parts: paradise and hell. Between them flows a stormy and fiery river of pitch. Over the river is a bridge made of one human hair. The righteous pass over the bridge in safety, but the sinners fall into the fire."

So long as the family exists, the dead can count upon it to support their needs, but if a family dies out its dead roam hungry and homeless for all eternity. This belief explains the dread which the Georgian Highlanders have of remaining without children, who will take care of their dead parents. Male children are particularly desired, not only because they are regarded as defenders of family interests in blood-feuds and supporters of the tradition, but also because they represent security and comfort for their parents after death, in their life beyond the grave, which explains the existence of the custom of the husband divorcing a sterile wife and taking another—with the first wife's permission if she has borne only female children. The same phenomenon accounts for the practice of the custom of the adoption of the son-in-law, known in the Georgian language as *sedsidze,* and, lacking a son-in-law, the adoption of a stranger—to have a posterity who will take care of dead parents.

The belief in spirits explains the custom of putting aside a portion of food at every feast or at ordinary meals for dead

[50] Khakhanov: a, 50-1.

6: Grigolia E-4, 5 (no date) 1939 RI1 Georgia RI1

like to see in this custom the indication of the old animosity between husband and wife, when the husband stole his wife from among his enemies. Consequently, they see in this apparently cold relation between husband and wife the indication of the supposedly former custom of marriage by capture. Although acceptance of this theory may be is necessary to construct the theory of evolution in human marriage, however if we leave all theories on the side and turn to reality, we will see that any custom of avoidance as between husband and wife, or between the married people and parents-in-law—the avoidance of parents-in-law which is practiced by many peoples in different parts of the world—do not show the symptoms of past animosity, but may be of purely religio-magical character.

Reviewing the position of children in the family, and their relations with their parents, we notice first the sexual discrimination —the boys are favored before the girls. Among the Svans the girls were even killed,[6] and the birth of a boy was the cause of a jubilee for the family, although it is necessary to mention the artificial restriction of the number of children among the Khevsurs. It is regarded as a great shame to have children during the first year of married life, and the number of children in the Khevsur family usually does not exceed three. Children are prepared for their future occupation: the girls from an early age helping with the housework, and the boys being taught to shoot, use the sabre, fight, and how to talk, or make speeches. Among the Khevsurs, for example, the boys at an early age are taught how to use a sabre, fencing with specially made wooden swords. Dr. Radde[7] describes a fight between two Khevsur boys, who were fighting, according to the regulations of expert fencers. "Auf den Gebrauchen der Waffen Zurueckkommen," writes Dr. Radde, "muss ich vor allem anderen erwaehnen, dass schon von Jugend auf dem Chewsuren-Knaben das Handhaben des Schwertes und Schildes gelehrt wird. . . . In ritterlicher Weise lassen sich dabei die Knaben auf ein Knie nieder und schlagen ganz geschickt, mit der linken Hand den Schild als Schutz gebrauchend und die Schlaege des Gegners parirend, regelrechte Primen, Secunden, Terzen und

[6] See Chapter VI, on Marriage.
[7] Radde: c, 256-7.

6. Grigolia E-4, 5 (no date) 1939 RI1 Georgia RI1

585 the smoke of the fire can blow in their faces, and the attendant of the *Khati*, the *dekanoz*, performs the wedding ceremony. He places before the couple the food and beer, and gives them waxen candles, one to each. The bride and groom rise from their seats and the *dekanoz* sews their garments together with a needle. The attendants of the young pair pass a cup of brandy to the *dekanoz*, who prays for the Lord's blessing upon the couple. After the prayer the *dekanoz* congratulates the young married couple and drinks to their health, as do all the others present on the occasion. The wedding ceremony over, the wedding feast begins with drinking, singing and dancing. The bride and groom do not take part in the singing and dancing.

After the wedding the kinfolk of the bride return home, while she remains in the house of the groom for one or two weeks, after which time she goes back, accompanied by the groom's relatives, to her parents, where she remains two or three months, or even a whole year. During this time the groom has no right to see her nor to visit the village where she lives. Only upon her return at the end of the time prescribed by custom into the house of her husband does the normal conjugal life begin.

The relations between the newlyweds are reserved. They avoid being seen together or even talking with each other in the presence of others, and a woman is forbidden to call her husband and his relatives by their proper names.

The first three days after the wedding, the couple sleep together, uncovered. With the exception of these three days, the Khevsurs as well as the Pshavs sleep separately from their wives and visit them secretly at night. Only after the birth of the first child do normal unrestricted relations begin.

842 162 The Khevsurs regard it as shameful if the woman becomes pregnant during the first three years of her married life. They avoid having large families. The number of children in a family usually does not exceed three. The reason for this artificial restriction of children lies in the hard economic conditions of the country and the struggle of the people for existence in the rocky, secluded Alpine regions of the Caucasus.

2 [see cat 116, p. 25 ff. -- Analyst]

6: Grigolia E-4, 5 (no date) 1939. RI1 Georgia RI1
Svan

nachvlash by the commoners reached 120 rubles, and among the *aznauri*, 240 rubles. Although the payment of the *nachvlash* was forbidden by the authorities in 1885, it did not cease to be practiced by the people.

In spite of the existence of the obligatory payment of the bride-price by the Svan groom, we cannot consider this practice as marriage by purchase, because of the large amount of dowry given to the bride by her relatives.

After the payment of the *nakdanur* and the *nachvlash*, the bride is regarded as belonging to the groom. In case of her desertion or the breaking of their word by the bride's parents, the result is a blood feud or the return of everything given to the bride in addition to the payment of indemnity. Thus marriage among the Svans, as among the other Georgian Highlanders, has the character of a legal business transaction—a contract.

The dowry (*mzithvi*) which the bride brings to the home of her husband, usually exceeds the bride-price. The dowry is formed usually of cattle (cows, horses, sheep), large copper cooking pots, clothing and adornments for the bride such as ear-rings, beads, rings, etc. Land is given as a dowry only when the bride-price (*nachvlash*) is paid by the groom in land. In addition to the dowry, the bride brings with her two oxen-loads of bread and brandy for the relatives of the groom.

Considering the large amount of dowry and the additional expense necessary for the marriage ceremonies which falls heavily upon the bride's family, it is not difficult to understand the current opinion among the Svans that a woman is a source of great expense and material loss for the entire family. This fact, together with the economic conditions of the country, may be were responsible for the practice of infanticide by the Svans, when newborn baby girls were put to death.

The reason for the preference given to boys over girls as expressed in the custom of infanticide is not difficult to comprehend if, in addition to the facts stated above, one takes into consideration the structure of the social organization where every male member is not only the defender of the material and moral interests of the family but is also the sustainer of its physical existence and the

6: Grigolia E-4, 5 (no date) 1939 RI1 Georgia RI1

guaranty of its propagation. The son is also the caretaker and guardian of the ancestor-worship—the cult of the dead, upon whose good will is believed to depend the well-being and the very existence of the family. Accordingly, the father sees in his son not only the supporter in his lifetime but also the guarantor of the peaceful rest of his soul after death.

Besides the economic causes, Professor M. Kovalevsky[16] sees also the influence of socio-political factors responsible for the custom of infanticide, especially in the Princely Svanetia. The inhabitants of this part of the country convinced the author that the subordinate position of the common people and the power of the ruling princes, *Dadeshkeliani*, to seize and put into service or sell into slavery every girl of common birth, was the main reason for the existence of the custom of infanticide in the Princely Svanetia.[a] On the other hand, the people in Free Svanetia[a] blamed the difficult economic conditions as the sole cause of the custom.

Although the girl was put to death soon after her birth, the birth of a boy, on the contrary, was the occasion of joy and special celebration.

There were different ways of putting the children to death, such as choking them with hot ashes, strangulation, placing a stone on the stomach, starving them to death by leaving them without any food.[17]

The investigators and travelers who visited the country of the Svans report the existence of infanticide among them and discuss it, expressing their opinions concerning the possible causes of this custom.

Thus the Frenchman, Raphael Bernoville, sees the cause of the custom in economic conditions, the absence in the family of the means to feed and raise the girls. As to the manner of putting the babies to death, he mentions the practice of choking them with ashes. He writes concerning the subject:[18] "Les femmes étant considerées par eux comme des bouches inutiles, lorsque les naissances excédaient le nombre utile des membres de la famille

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[16] Kovalevsky: a, II, 41-4.
[17] Stoianov: 435.
[18] Bernoville: 103.

[a] [see cat 116, p 4 for Svan territorial divisions -- Analyst]